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ABSTRACT

As a means of dramatizing the interrelationships that determine the climate of a school, a simulation experience was created for participants in this workshop on school climate improvement. A discussion of the intent of the experience includes descriptions of "good" and "poor" school environments and their impact on the school community. Directions used in the educational game are reproduced, including: (1) role-playing assignments; (2) instructions to small groups; (3) a grading sheet on effective communications within the school community; (4) an item analysis chart; (5) definitions of climate terms; (6) rules for brainstorming; (7) description of a school climate improvement task force; (8) summary of the school climate improvement process; (9) sample charge statement to a new task force; (10) organizational plan for school climate improvement; (11) sample plan of objectives, responsibilities, and activities of a task force; and (12) school climate improvement rationale. (JD)

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SCHOOL CLIMATE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

by Mr. Eugene Howard and Mr. David Jackson

Everyone uses the term "climate" somewhat differently. School learning climate includes those characteristics of a school which are most frequently associated with achievement, and it is only a piece of the climate concept.

Eugene Howard

Our goal is to build bridges across the chasm which traditionally has separated what we know as good practice from what we actually do in schools; that is, to bring practice more into line with what research tells us is promising or successful. The bridge, I think, consists of a process, some tools, and some instruction on how to use the tools. In order to make practice and research more congruent, we need a simple process, not a complex one, not one that requires a room full of computer printouts, but a manageable process for putting into effect good practice.

You will have participatory, hands-on experience with a major part of an eight-step process on school climate improvement. Hopefully, by taking part in this simulated experience, you will be able to see the interrelationship of all the steps.

Before we begin our simulation, I would like to share a few vignettes about what climate means. One of the ways in which we work with schools and faculties is by going into a school with a visitation team. Being part of a visitation team gives us an opportunity to experience the climate of many different kinds of schools.

Red Sandstone Elementary School. I can recall, for example, walking into a school in Vail, Colorado. Vail has a very beautiful elementary school. Look out front and you can see the ski runs. Go across the bridge and you're right at the ski level.

The first thing I saw when I walked in the door of the Red Sandstone Elementary School was a big pile of canned goods and clothing. I went up to the secretary, and I said, "Why are all these canned goods and clothing piled up, what's going on in here?"

"Well," she said, "a family got burned out of its trailer, and the faculty and the kids are all pitching in to help them out over a real tough time."

I think that as soon as you walk in the door you can get the feel of a school. Schools have personalities and you can sense whether that place is a warm place or a cold place. Those are joint terms, warm or cold, personal or

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impersonal, caring places or not caring places, trusting places or not trusting places. That's something you can feel.

First impressions—how a place feels—that's what we're talking about when we talk about climate.

Centennial Elementary School. There is a Centennial Elementary School in suburban Denver. It's called Centennial School because it's right next to the race track. I was interviewing a teacher. We were sitting out in the hall, and she was showing me a lot of simulations and games that she had developed for her classroom. I was taking notes on interview cards that are provided for such occasions, and I was classifying what she was saying about climate determinants.

We were sitting at kind of an intersection with long corridors, at 90 degree angles. I could see down one corridor. I saw at the end of that corridor a teacher and a class starting to move from one place to another. All of a sudden, almost at the intersection, the whole group stopped. I couldn't figure out why they were stopping, because I couldn't see down the other corridor. So I got up and I looked down the other corridor. This is a school that has a lot of handicapped kids. There was a little kid who looked as if she was about seven or eight. She had one of those tripods that you put in front of you and you walk up to it. She had started at the far end of the corridor, and was slowly working her way up to the intersection. The class was just standing there watching her. When she finally got there, everybody applauded.

I went over to the teacher, and I said, "Why did you do that? I didn't even see you stop the class."

She said, "In this school we teach everybody to care about everybody else."

That's what we're talking about.

A New York High School. Another example. This is a large high school in a community in New York State. I walked in the door of this large high school, and I stopped the first kid I saw.

I said, "Tell me, is this a good school?"

She looked at me and said, "Man, this place is the pits!"

My first impression! She was right, by the way. Subsequently, I came to agree with her and many of her observations. We're talking about the extent to which there is trust in the school--the extent to which there is caring and respect.

The school as an institution is a caring kind of place. We saw the school as having a personality of it's own, very much as individuals have personalities.

Nova Laboratory School. I served as director of the Nova Laboratory School in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, for a short period of time before they threw me out. The reason they threw me out was that we developed a very open and positive climate school which nobody loved except the kids. This was the only school that I have ever left where the kids cried. I guess behind the scenes the parents applauded. We did not build any lockers in that school. All we built were little cabinets like furniture in a home. I hate lockers by the way, they're noisy and they're cold, and they add to a hospital-like quality of a school. It's not good for the feel of the school. In Florida, you don't need a place to hang your coats, just a place for books and materials; a locker is not necessary.

About the second month of school, a group of kids came in to see me. We usually sat around in a circle on the floor to talk over problems. They said, "You have a problem in your school." I said, "What kind of problem do I have?"

"People are stealing like crazy around this school."

"Why is that a problem for me? I'm not doing any of the stealing."

"But they're stealing from us, and it's a problem for us. Furthermore, we think you should do something about it."

We say that a school with a positive climate is a place where morale is very high. It is a place where there is a lot of respect, where the school respects the people and the people respect one another, and the people respect learning. It is a place where there is a great deal of caring.

"What do you think I should do?"

"We think you should put locks on our lockers."

"Why do you think I didn't put locks on the lockers in the first place?"

"Oh, you didn't put locks on our lockers in the first place, because you wanted to show us that you trusted us."

"That's right. Not only that, but I wanted you to trust one another because that's what this school is all about."

Then one kid said, "I know somebody that's doing the stealing."

And this is one of the things that happens so seldom in this professional life. Just at that instant, somebody opened the door and stuck his head in and one of the people in the circle said, "And there's one of them now--let's go get him!" And they all got up and they ran after the kid, and they grabbed him and brought him back in the circle.

They said to this kid, "You and some other people that we know around here have been stealing our stuff, and we want it to stop!"

> It wasn't my problem at all; it was their problem. What the school stood for was trust and caring, and that's what climate is. Places that stand for respect and trust and caring are different kinds of places than places that stand for distrust, and suspicion, and fragmentation where everybody is doing something to everybody else.

SIMULATION

We have established in our state a process for moving a school toward a positive climate. The entire process takes about six months, but there is a part of that which I would like to ask you to experience today. David Jackson is going to describe the series of events in that process after our simulation.

We are saying that it is important to strengthen strengths as well as to strengthen weaknesses. We are not saying, "Let's go find out what is wrong with your school and we will fix it." All you get when you find a problem and bring it up to a minimum level of acceptability is relief from a problem. The way you get excellence is to find out what is working already in a school, and then help people do it better. That is the positive approac[illegible].

Imagine that this group is a group from a single school and not from all over a region like we really are. Imagine that:

- some of you are parent leaders;
- some of you are faculty leaders; and
- some of you are student leaders.

A part of the simulation requires identity cards (Appendix D, No. 1). For that reason, it is necessary to get five to a table, because there are five distinct identities.

We would like for you to be true to your role in accordance with the role card, and move through the simulation in accordance with the instruction sheet, "Instruction to Small Groups" (Appendix D, No. 2). The purpose of the identity cards is not to set up adversarial roles, even though there are two teachers in the group who have slightly different philosophies. This is not an experiment with conflict in this simulation.

It will be necessary to be able to read the output information from the instrument in this simulation. There is a written instrument that is used, not to measure the climate, but an evaluation instrument that is diagnostic. It responds to the question, "What should we do to improve the climate of the school?"

(Appendix D, No. 3). It is a good thing to read the question as you discuss it, because this summarizes the questions and the visual on some of the points.

On the grid (Appendix D, No. 4), notice that down the side of the grid there are specific activities, programs, and projects which might take place in order to improve the climate in accordance with a particular determinant.

I think the most important element of building a positive climate is that of involving lots and lots of people in making the school a better place.

- The "what is" lines indicate student (line 1) and faculty (line A) responses to the question "To what extent is this practice operating in the school now?"

- On the "what should be" lines, both students (line 2) and faculty (line B) are asked to make a judgement as to the potential of that activity for improving climate if it were working well.

What both teachers and kids may be saying is, "We are not doing it, but if we did do it, we would have a very positive influence on the climate of our school." That's the big gap. So on the chart, look for those big gaps. Those are good potential projects. If you learn to read these charts, they will tell you a great deal about what faculty and students or parents (if you want to plot parents' reactions on the line) are saying.

- We call an item a strength if it is given a 3.0 or over on "what is." The 3.0 means that the item is operating well, but on a limited basis. At 4.0 it is operating well schoolwide. So if the item is 3.0 or over on "what is," and 3.4 on "what should be," 3.4 would indicate a positive effect and it is probably working well throughout the school.

- If the item is 2.2 or under on "what is," 2 meaning that it's hardly happening at all in the school, plus a gap of 1.2 or more between what it should be, this is an area of concern. That's the criteria to use in order to place labels on the items.

Each group will deal with a different determinant (Appendix D, No. 5). The example on the handout is "Effective Communications." Another determinant is "Active Learning," the extent to which learning is hands-on, reality-oriented, high-involvement as opposed to low involvement, theoretical, etc. Another is "Support Instruction," the extent to which kids can receive support and help when they need it, and so on.

Counselors or psychologists will typically talk about school climate in terms of interpersonal relationships or characteristics of people. Organizational people very often will look at school climate as an aspect of the organizational personality, i.e., to what extent is it a healthy organization or an unhealthy organization.

These are called determinants, because they are characteristic of schools that determine the extent to which the climate is positive or negative. Each group will be dealing with one of these determinants. When the group reports, everyone will hear some information about all of the determinants, and it will be clearer what they mean. Read the definition for the climate term that is being discussed in each group, so that the group will understand.

The group will brainstorm ideas for improving climate that relate to the determinant that the group discusses. Some of these ideas will come from the instrument itself where there is good faculty support or good student support for the idea. There should be 25 or 30 ideas on how to improve climate in the way related to the topic that is under discussion. There are complete instructions (Appendix D, No. 6). Read the rules on brainstorming and follow them. Try to resist the temptation during the brainstorming part of the simulation to discuss each item as it's presented. The idea is to present ideas that trigger other ideas, and get as long a list as possible. Discuss the ideas and prioritize them.

The next thing that would happen, if we were to carry out the simulation to the end of the workshop, would be everyone would receive something like a ballot that would contain a list of all 12 of the determinants. Participants would be asked to name the top three on the list which they feel, if improved in the school, would result in the greatest improvement in the climate. These would then be tallied while the rest of the workshop was on break, and then we would come back and report what the top three choices for determinants were.

At that point, we would ask for the formation of task forces in those three areas (Appendix D, No. 7).

- We can form one task force, or as many as five, but never more than five. Three is an optimal number.

- We would ask for volunteers who would like to work on those three. Maybe one of them would be Active Learning, and so the Active Learning group would already have a number of suggestions to start their action plan. Maybe another one would be the Material Determinants, and they would already have a number of suggestions for the task force.

- The last thing that we would do would be to meet with those task forces for just a few moments in the workshop to determine a time and a place for their first meeting and to get the list of the people who volunteered.

Usually, we will get 50 percent of the participants volunteering for a task force. The lowest percentage we have gotten was 30 percent. That was because proper work had not been done to prepare people before the workshop. There has to be an awareness session.

The highest has been 100 percent. That was in a fairly small elementary school of 500 students where the faculty just decided that they all would be involved in the project. And that was beautiful, because we had the whole cafeteria with every faculty member working on a task force.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Question: Do you have the kids involved in the task forces?

Answer: Yes, in fact, a lot of student councils sponsor task forces of just students, the Student Council School Improvement Task Force. In one area, there was a committee to involve the uninvolved, where the kids sought out kids who weren't involved in any of the activities and invited them to come in to activities. They formed a committee to decide what kinds of activities they might offer that would be attractive to some of the uninvolved students. One of the most common things is mural painting. You can tell when you're in a climate improvement school because of the murals. And that's very often sponsored by the Student Council.

Question: Are the members of the task force volunteers?

Answer: Yes, they are volunteers. In the workshop we invite parent leaders and students to participate. The student leaders who come are usually sent by the Student Council and prestigious-type organizations in the school. So we're involving leaders to start. But the Council may spin off a task force that would involve non-Council members, depending on the need. The parent organization might sponsor task forces. Task forces can be teacher sponsored and predominantly composed of teaching staff. A task force on improving

effectiveness of teaching would probably be mostly teachers, or 100 percent teachers. A task force on improving communications, especially between the home and the school, might very well be a lot of parents, teachers, and kids, all three, since you want to improve communication three ways. So, the content or the make up of a task force depends on tasks. We suggest that you take another look at your membership once you develop your preliminary work plan, because you may not have the type of talent that you need to complete the task.

Question: How to you involve parents? Do you take this written form to parents?

Answer: Certainly, as you can tell by looking at the questions, this would give some parents a lot of trouble. It's asking for information a lot of parents do not have about the school. So, I would use it only with informed parents who know what is going on in the school. I would, however, involve as many parents as possible on the baseline data survey. That is more like an attitude or an opinionnaire about different aspects of the climate in the school, and they would be 100 percent involved in this.

Question: When great discrepancies occur between what the teachers think is happening and what the students think is happening, how do you deal with getting the teachers to accept the students' opinions about how things are happening?

Answer: I think the best way is to do a workshop on some of those topics, bring the students and faculty together in the same discussion group, and simply ask for the interpretation of the question. And that can happen before the workshop in which you've just participated. The first step is to get the data, the second step is to present the data, and the third step is to ask the question, "What do the data mean?" At that point, you are there as a faculty member and you're saying, "How come the students are saying this, and the faculty is saying this?" Through discussion you get some answers.

Question: But is it just student leaders that are involved?

Answer: Initially.

Question: Maybe they don't share. Maybe they have a different opinion than the overall students do.

Answer: I'm sure they do. One way you could get at that, although it's not typically done, is pull in some of the people used from some of the "out" groups.

Question: Do you ever have a battery that just totally rejects an opinion?

Answer: Usually, the first set of plans that a task force develops are preliminary plans. And as it grows, it can grow in the direction that some of your dissidents might want it to grow. The involvement is not over with the workshop. The task forces involve people or come in contact with people.

Question: Is the data that we have here provided only by student leaders and not by the total student body?

Answer: As a rule, that's the case. If you go to total student body, or a sampling of the student body, you'll get slightly different perceptions and you might get into the problem of people not caring. Now you can go either way, and there are pros and cons about going either way. One of the most important things is that the people who respond be given adequate preparation. That has to be done through some large group presentation. Filmstrips are used for that. There has to be a series of awareness activities leading up to this point so that people who are responding know first of all what the process is, what's going to be done with the information, and how they are going to be involved in what's going to be done. If you can do that with the whole student body, then fine. In some cases it's not recommended.

Question: How are the leaders identified?

Answer: Usually through the Council. The Council plus leaders of designated organizations. I'm not presribing one way or the other.

Question: I'm an elementary school principal. We do not have a Student Council. How do you get students' opinions?

Answer: Usually, in an elementary school, I will get only the opinions of the older children. We don't have a form of this instrument for primary kids. There is a form of the baseline data instrument that can be used for children as young as first and second grade, so that they would be involved in the opinionnaire which measures climate, but not in the diagnostic context. We're talking about two instruments here. The first instrument is to establish baseline data and answer the

question, "To what extent is the climate positive or negative in a school?" You want everybody to answer who can possibly answer, because you are going to use the results of that instrument to chart the progress of your school and to find out whether or not you've actually made a difference in climate. In a diagnostic instrument, you want the people who are the most knowledgeable about what it is you are diagnosing, and your primary kids have a lot of trouble with this instrument. I don't think you'd use this.

David Jackson

School climate improvement is not something that is done to fix the school so that it stays fixed. School climate improvement is long-range.

In Kentucky, after looking at the results of research and looking at data that were generated through school climate activities, we believe that all schools, that every school, at every building level, should be continually involved in trying to improve the climate of the school. And when you're working on climate improvement, you're working on improving the climate for students, for faculty, and for the community. You're trying to make it a better climate for everybody that has a connection with the school. When it's a better place, the data will showing that a lot of good things will happen at that school.

We were looking for a process that we could offer to schools in Kentucky, which would serve as a continual kind of process that could be used over and over and that could keep focusing on school climate from year to year. We needed a process to offer people, and we found this process that we believe is a good model. It was developed by the League of School Climate Improvement in the State of Colorado under the guiding hand of Eugene Howard.

A summary of the process is the handout (Appendix D, No. 8). There are some unique points at each step, and we will consider these points.

The first step in the process is the formation of a School Climate Improvement Committee at the building level, whether it's an elementary school, middle school, or a high school.

- the committee is responsible for the specific charges of the first three steps;
- it is the managing group of the Climate Improvement Process;
- it keeps the school focused on improving climate in a particular school;

- it is actually a working committee, not just an advisory group; and

- it should be composed of some select people; staff members, parents, students, and teachers who believe that school should be humane, who are willing to do some work, and who are willing to bring some real skills to the committee. Also, there should be two or three people from the community.

The principal is a key person in the School Climate Improvement Committee. Before the first committee meeting, the principal draws up a charge statement so that the members will understand what is to be done (see Appendix D, No. 9). There are certains tasks that are defined for the committee, and it is very important that they be given these tasks.

The principal will say, "I don't know what's happened to this faculty, but I've never seen them so enthusiastic." This is because people are actively involved in making the school a better place. They no longer feel put upon or that everything is coming down on them (the major causes of teacher burn-out). They can actually influence the nature of the place which in turn influences the climate.

The second step in the process is that the School Climate Improvement Committee collects baseline data. The data are not collected in order to compare one school to another, but to state what the school is like, before anything is done to change the climate. There are two types of baseline data that should be collected:

1. the general overall measurement of the extent to which the school climate is positive at the time the data are collected, and

2. measurement of the inadequate symptoms of climate.

   Some of these symptoms are:

   - absenteeism,
   - truancy,
   - discipline problems,
   - vandalism,
   - low and failing grades,
   - dropout,
   - class cutting, and
   - pupil apathy.

If there are a lot of these problems, then there probably is a negative climate. As your climate improves, the symptoms will be relieved: they have a tendency to reduce.

The instrument that is used to look at the first type of data collected is the CFK Limited Instrument which we have developed.

The third step is the faculty, student, and parent awareness. There are activities to prepare them to understand what climate improvement is all about, and what is to be accomplsihed in the process.

I would like to suggest that the time has arrived when we need to shift the emphasis from remediating students over to remediating schools. If, indeed, we can change the schools that our children attend to more positive kinds of places, then we can get a change in the symptoms of alienation simultaneously.

The fourth step of the process is to complete an assessment. You have the results of one type of assessment in your simulation with the charts presenting the concerns and the strengths.

After the climate of the school has been assessed, there is a workshop session in which there is some brainstorming and prioritizing. The faculty, some of the students, and some of the parents go through this workshop. That's the simulation you've been in. In this process, you were looking at the assessment data, and then brainstorming and prioritizing. That simulation took you through that particular step.

After the brainstorming and prioritizing, there is the formation of task forces, and we've talked about that a good deal already. Task forces are working groups that volunteer to work on a particular determinant using the results of the brainstorming. They operate on priorities that were established in the brainstorming session.

As the process moves on, it moves to task force management and formative evaluation. The task force management is extremely important. The principal and the School Climate Improvement Committee are the guiding forces in the management of the task forces. They:

- keep them on a schedule,
- keep them active, and
- keep them on the task.

The final step before this process is recycled is the evaluation of what has happened as a result of going through the process.

That is what we have been doing all of these years. We have been organizing to attack symptoms, and all we do when we attack symptoms is rearrange the status quo, because we never get to the causes. The causes of the kinds of symptoms of alienation have common roots. Those roots lie in the nature of the school. There is also a set of roots going into the nature of the family and home, and the nature of the community and the society, but the ones that we can control the most are the roots that lie in the nature of the school.

This process is not particularly new, but there are some unique points in the process.

- The organization of the School Climate Improvement Committee is unique. The principal is key. The principal must be the guiding hand and have an interest in improving climate. Most principals are very interested in improving climate because it will reduce their problems and it will help their achievement levels. However, the principal needs some kind of organization, and then he/she can provide the process.

- The task force chairman generally sits on the School Climate Improvement Committee and is able to continually report to his/her particular task force.

  The committee may be composed of:

  - student leaders,
  - a counselor or two,
  - a parent or two,
  - a leader or two in the community, and
  - teachers.

- It is a kind of cross-committee, and it's different from the principal's advisory committee or council. It is a committee that specifically focuses on the management of the school climate improvement within that school; that is its major task.

- In order to get the committee functioning, it must have a charge. The charge needs to come from the principal. Before the committee has its first meeting, or when it has its first meeting, it should have a charge from the principal of what is expected to happen with the particular committee.

- This committee is a working committee. It's not a committee that thinks up other things for other people to do, but it actually works. In order to keep everybody on the committee involved, specific tasks and specific responsibilities are assigned to committee members. There is a planning sheet for committee members (Appendix D, No. 10).

There are specific activities that are assigned, and there are target dates for completing those activities. The committee and each member of that committee is expected to have a responsibility and is given timelines. They develop timeframes in order to complete the work of that committee.

- Another unique factor about the process is the baseline data that are collected, and the fact that the committee has a charge to pick up this baseline data. It is unique in the way that the information is used. It is gathered as baseline data to say:
  - this is where we are as far as climate is concerned today; and
  - we will come back and look at the same data to see whether or not our activities have made any difference in what is going on in our schools:
    - if there has been some change;
    - if there has been a reduction in the problems that are the symptoms of negative climate; and
    - if the climate has improved.

The committee involves itself in making the school people totally aware of what school climate is all about. The kit that is marketed by ASCD has the total process in it. There are filmstrips and audiotapes that are very good for awareness sessions to explain what climate improvement is all about.

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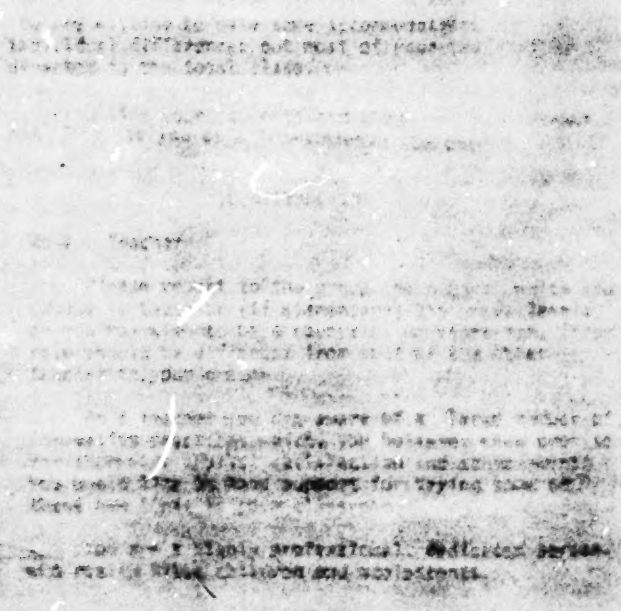
APPENDIX D:

Handouts to Presentations by
Mr. Eugene Howard and Mr. David Jackson



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IDENTITY CARD

Role: Administrator

You may choose to be a principal or an assistant principal.

As an administrator you are interested in encouraging the development of a positive climate so that achievement can be improved and so that staff and student morale can be enhanced.

You believe in involving people in decision-making and planning, but you are impatient. At times push people a little too hard and they resist your pressure.

You listen well and genuinely respect other peoples' opinions.

IDENTITY CARD

Role: Parent

You are a member of the school advisory committee and an active supporter of the PTA. You have three children in school. Your major interest is that your children receive a "good" education which will prepare them for college. You are generally supportive of school improvement activities. You know a lot about the school and its programs.

IDENTITY CARD

Role: Student Leader

You are a member of the student council and very active in athletics and several other activities. You are interested in involving groups of students in school improvement activities.

IDENTITY CARD

Role: Teacher

Please report to the group the subject which you choose to teach or (if elementary) the grade level; or, you may wish to be a counselor or librarian. (Your role should be different from that of the other teacher in your group).

You consider yourself a traditional, not an innovative teacher. You believe in well-structured, subject-centered instruction based on high standards. You are willing to make some accommodations for individual differences, but most of your teaching is directed to the total class.

You like your students and they like and respect you. They see you as a "no-nonsense" teacher.

IDENTITY CARD

Role: Teacher

Please report to the group the subject which you choose to teach or (if elementary) the grade level; or you may wish to be a counselor or librarian. (Your role should be different from that of the other teacher in your group)

As a teacher you are aware of a large number of innovative practices which, you believe, show promise for improving pupils' satisfaction and achievement. You would like to have support for trying some of these new ideas in your classroom.

You are a highly professional, dedicated person who really likes children and adolescents.

AEL REGIONAL WORKSHOP SCHOOL CLIMATE

Instructions to Small Groups

Determinant to be considered:

1. As soon as you receive this instruction sheet ask one individual in your group to request that each participant introduce himself or herself to the group. All participants should be asked to give their names and to describe briefly (30 seconds) what interest they have in school climate.

2. Once the introductions are completed, the group selects a group leader and a recorder.

3. The group leader now asks each participant to assume an identity for the simulation. This is done by distributing randomly the identity cards provided in the package.

4. The group leader then reads the following statement to the group:

   "This small group session has been designed as a simulation so that participants can experience one important portion of the school climate improvement process. The simulation will replicate that portion of the climate improvement workshop which involves a large number of people in using the data from the ASCD instrument as a basis for planning climate improvement activities.

   This group has been given the data regarding the faculty's reaction to a number of activities, programs, and projects related to one climate determinant, _____. Here is a sheet summarizing this data."

5. Review the Item Analysis Information (10 minutes)

   At this point the group leader distributes the item analysis report form related to the determinant to be discussed. As soon as each participant has received the report, the leader informs the group that he or she will ask several questions about the report which will help participants understand its significance.

   (1) Note those items which have been identified by the faculty as strengths. (These items can be identified by the "S's" which have been written onto the report sheet.)

   What are some of the ways that these activities are contributing to a positive climate?

   (2) Note those items which have been identified by the faculty as concerns. (These items can be identified by the "C's" which have been written onto the report sheet.)

   Why has very little been done in this school to implement this idea?

(3) Discuss any other items which the group finds of interest. Be sure that the participants understand the meaning of all of the items.

6. Brainstorming (25 minutes) (see enclosed page)

Next, read the Rules for Brainstorming to your group. Then ask your group members to think of as many ideas as they can for strengthening the climate determinant you have been assigned to consider. Your group may wish to consider strengthening some activities, programs, and projects already under way in your school as well as implementing new activities. Encourage participants to suggest ideas from their own experience as well as ideas which have been reported on the report form.

NOTE: Ideas should be of the type which a task force of parents, staff, and/or students could implement. (Try to avoid making recommendations to the central office or the board.)

Ask your group recorder to list all ideas offered on the large sheet of paper which has been furnished. Your group will have 20 minutes to list as many ideas as possible.

7. Prioritizing (10 minutes)

Next, ask your group to seriously consider recommending from 3 to 6 of the most promising ideas which have been listed. Ideas recommended should be those which the group feels have the greatest potential for influencing the climate of your school in a positive manner. Recommended ideas should also be implementable in your school.

When agreement has been reached by your group regarding an item, ask your recorder to place a large star or other symbol in front of that item on the list.

8. Reporting (2 minutes)

Your workshop leader will ask for a report so that all workshop participants will be aware of your group's recommendations. Please report only on your group's TOP priority recommendations.

Please limit the length of your report to two minutes.

ERH/es

What Is (the extent to which the activity takes place in your school)
1 - does not take place in this school
2 - is in a beginning state of development. It operates on a very limited basis
3 - is operating well but on a limited basis
4 - is operating well on a school-wide basis affecting most pupils in the school

PROCESS DETERMINANTS

C. EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS

What Should Be (the extent to which the activity would influence the climate of the school positively)
1 - would influence the school's climate negatively or not at all
2 - would have a very limited positive effect on the school's climate
3 - would have a positive effect on the school's climate
4 - would have a very positive effect on the school's climate

___1.	Communications between the school and parents are facilitated through the use of newsletters and letters from the school and from various programs within the school.	1. _____
___ 2.	Parents have opportunities to communicate with teachers informally by attending a variety of school-sponsored activities such as parent orientation programs, school performances, sports, back to school nights, dramatic and art activities, or art fairs.	2. _____
___ 3.	Communications between parents and the school administration and faculty is facilitated through a parent volunteer program.	3. _____
___ 4.	Parents learn about their children's achievements in school through a "positive calls home" or a positive letters home" program.	4. _____
___ 5.	Parents, faculty members, and individual pupils meet periodically to discuss the pupil's progress through a parent-pupil conferencing program.	5. _____
___ 6.	Parents attend parenting classes or parent effectiveness training programs as a means of communicating with the school about problems they are having with their children.	6. _____
___ 7.	A PTA or similar organization functions to keep communications open between the home and the school.	7. _____
___ 8.	Parents and other community members communicate with the school by participating in community-sponsored events which use school facilities.	8. _____
___ 9.	The principal periodically invites parents to meet with him or her to discuss school programs, plans, and problems (e.g. a "coffee klatch" day).	9. _____
___10.	Administrators and faculty members facilitate informal communication between school and community by participating in community organizations and attending community-sponsored events.	10. _____

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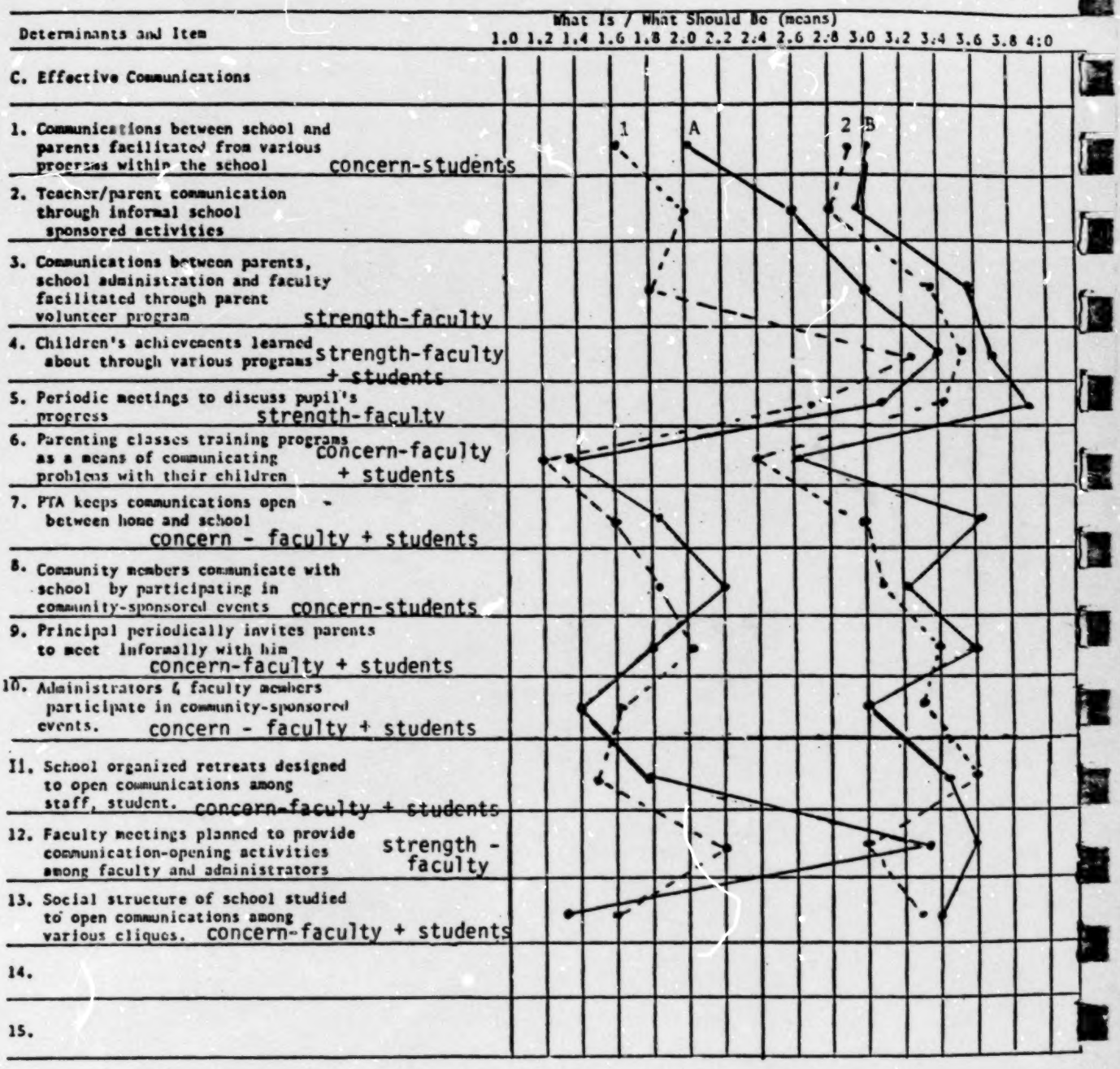
__ 11.	The school organizes retreats designed to open communications among staff members, among students, or between staff and students.	11. _____
__ 12.	Faculty meetings are planned to provide opportunities for ni- communication-opening activities among faculty members and between the faculty and administration.	12. _____
__ 13.	The social structure (clique structure) of the school is studied and activities are planned to open communications among various cliques which are isolated from one another.	13. _____
__ 14.		14. _____
__ 15.		15. _____
☐	Total	☐

Appendix D, No. 4

PROCESS DETERMINANTS

ITEM ANALYSIS REPORT FORM
Mini-Audit #2

School _____
Date _____


Determinants and Item
What Is / What Should Be (means)
1.0 1.2 1.4 1.6 1.8 2.0 2.2 2.4 2.6 2.8 3.0 3.2 3.4 3.6 3.8 4.0
C. Effective Communications
1. Communications between school and parents facilitated from various programs within the school concern-students
2. Teacher/parent communication through informal school sponsored activities
3. Communications between parents, school administration and faculty facilitated through parent volunteer program strength-faculty
4. Children's achievements learned about through various programs strength-faculty + students
5. Periodic meetings to discuss pupil's progress strength-faculty
6. Parenting classes training programs as a means of communicating problems with their children concern-faculty + students
7. PTA keeps communications open between home and school concern - faculty + students
8. Community members communicate with school by participating in community-sponsored events concern-students
9. Principal periodically invites parents to meet informally with him concern-faculty + students
10. Administrators & faculty members participate in community-sponsored events. concern - faculty + students
11. School organized retreats designed to open communications among staff, student. concern-faculty + students
12. Faculty meetings planned to provide communication-opening activities among faculty and administrators strength - faculty
13. Social structure of school studied to open communications among various cliques. concern-faculty + students
14.
15.
1
A
2
B

NOTE: (1) Lots of student and faculty support for items 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11 & 13

(2) Low student and faculty support for item 6.

Which strengths should be strengthened?
Which weaknesses should be strengthened?

CODE -
Students: 1What is - - - - - -
2What should be - - - -

Faculty: AWhat is _____
BWhat should be _____

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DEFINITIONS OF CLIMATE TERMS
(as used in climate assessment)

EVIDENCES OF A POSITIVE CLIMATE

Evidences of caring, respect, trust, cohesiveness, high morale, and continuous social and academic growth are sought. Characteristics of the school as well as of the people in the school are noted.

This section, to a large extent, deals with the "symptoms" of a positive climate.

PROGRAM DETERMINANTS

1. OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTIVE LEARNING:

Evidences of students learning by inter-acting with "pieces of reality" are sought. In active learning, pupils become totally involved in the learning process. "Active Learning" is the opposite of "passive".

2. INDIVIDUALIZED PERFORMANCE EXPECTATION AND VARIED REWARD SYSTEMS:

Practices are identified whereby staff members recognize individual differences among pupils. Everyone is not expected to learn the same things in the same way or in the same length of time. Rewards are sufficiently available so that all pupils, with effort, may expect to be positively and frequently recognized by the school.

3. VARIED LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS/FLEXIBLE CURRICULUM AND EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES:

A wide variety of settings is provided by the school so that appropriate settings are available for many activities. Some such settings may be in places other than the school. The curriculum is different for each learner. Each learner's individual interests, maturity, ability and learning style is recognized. Extra-curricular activities are sufficiently varied so that the interests of all pupils may be accommodated.

4. SUPPORT AND STRUCTURE APPROPRIATE TO LEARNER'S MATURITY:

Pupils who need special assistance in being productive are provided with that assistance. Pupils who can assume responsibility for helping others are provided opportunities for doing so. Pupils needing very little structure are provided with more autonomy than pupils who are more dependent on others.

5.. RULES COOPERATIVELY DETERMINED:

The rules of the school, the individual classrooms, and the school's major activities have been cooperatively developed, are generally understood, and are revised as needed.

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PROCESS DETERMINANTS

6. PROBLEM SOLVING ABILITY/IDENTIFYING AND WORKING WITH CONFLICTS/INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION-MAKING:

Established processes for identifying and resolving personal problems and inter-personal conflicts are identified. Likewise, information regarding how institutional problems are identified and resolved is sought. How the school involves people in personal, academic, and institutional decision-making is examined.

7. IMPROVEMENT OF SCHOOL GOALS - PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE:

Goals are of two types: school improvement goals and pupil learning goals. Planning processes include planning for school improvement as well as planning for personal growth.

8. EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS:

Formal processes which have been established to facilitate communications are identified.

9. AUTONOMY WITH ACCOUNTABILITY:

Information is sought regarding the extent to which the people in the school have been given responsibility for their own and the school's improvement. Processes for delegating authority and holding individuals and groups responsible (accountable) for results are identified.

10. EFFECTIVE TEACHING-LEARNING STRATEGIES:

Strategies which are consistent with what is known (and what is strongly suspected) about promoting learning and motivation are identified. Some of the strategies will be isolated - i.e., characteristics of only a few teachers. Others will be general - school-wide.

MATERIAL DETERMINANTS

11. ADEQUATE RESOURCES AND SUPPORTIVE LOGISTICAL SYSTEMS:

Both material and personal resources are considered. Resources within the community which are used by pupils and staff are also noted. The term "logistics", refers to the process whereby needed resources are readily made available - e.g., if you order something will you receive it promptly with a minimum of red tape and hassle.

12. SUITABILITY OF SCHOOL PLANT AND GROUNDS:

Determinant #11 deals with adequacy; this determinant deals with suitability - i.e., the extent to which the buildings and grounds facilitate the type of educational programs and processes which are being implemented.

RULES FOR BRAINSTORMING

1. Anyone can contribute, but only one person talks at a time.

2. Give the group leader time enough to write down one idea before you offer another.

3. It is strictly against the rules to criticize or otherwise discuss an idea. Discussion comes later after all the ideas are out.

4. Remember that what is desired is quantity of ideas, not quality. Offer your idea even if you don't think it is a very good one. Your "wild" idea may trigger a not-so-wild ideas from someone else. Any idea is of value.

5. Hitch-hike or combine ideas. Not only should you come up with ideas -- you should also be alert to adding to or improving on another person's idea.

A DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL CLIMATE IMPROVEMENT TASK FORCE

Eugene R. Howard

I. Rationale & Assumptions

A. That if large numbers of people are involved in the school improvement process, the effect on morale, commitment, and cohesiveness will be positive.

B. That the principal and a small number of leaders cannot, by themselves, do all of the work necessary to make significant improvements in schools; therefore, assistance is needed.

C. That teachers, parents, and student leaders, if given an opportunity to work for school improvement, will welcome the opportunity to do so.

D. That the willingness of staff, pupils, and parents to assume responsibility for school improvement activities will increase as positive results are demonstrated by the original task forces -- that the idea that anyone can contribute to making the school a better place is contagious.

E. That task forces organized to affect positively the determinants of climate (active learning, support and structure, communications, decision-making, etc.) are more likely to have a significant and lasting impact on a school's climate than are task forces focused on symptoms or problems. (Although the task force structure can be used for improving symptoms and solving problems.)

F. That making a significant impact on a school's climate by affecting its determinants is a long-term, not a short-term process.

II. Definition

A. A task force is a group of individuals who work together in a common effort to achieve agreed-upon objectives. It is a planning, working, and learning group, not a studying and recommending group. Unlike a committee, a task force does not think up things for other people to do. Rather, the task force is an action group. It has accepted an assignment to assume the responsibility for planning and implementing a set of school improvement activities.

B. Task forces have been delegated the authority to complete those activities which are specified in the SCIC's charge statement (see sample in Appendix A) and in the task force's action plan (see sample in Appendix B).

C. The task force idea was developed by business and industry as a means of assembling the best available talent in an organization and focusing that talent on unusually complex projects. As in business and industry, task force membership is drawn from any or all organizational units.

D. Short-term task forces may address specific problems, solve those problems, and then disband, thereby making a limited impact on school climate.

E. Task forces focusing on climate determinants, because of the complex, technical nature of their tasks, usually are long-term, remaining operational for from 2-4 years. The membership and objectives of such task forces tend to change from year to year. The overall focus, however, remains constant.

III. Organization

A. The task force leader, usually chosen by the task force membership is assigned the following responsibilities:

1. To facilitate the task force's planning so that specific action plans related to the task force's improvement objectives are developed.

2. To serve as the task force's representative on the school climate improvement committee (SCIC).

3. To present the original action plan to the SCIC for approval and to present changes to the plan to SCIC as they are proposed by task force members.

4. To provide periodic progress reports to the SCIC, to the faculty, and to other groups regarding the task force's accomplishments.

5. To expedite the implementation of the task force's action plan by encouraging each task force member to complete his or her assigned duties in an efficient manner. Also, to monitor the action plan's time line so that planned activities occur on schedule.

6. To encourage the professional growth of task force members by recommending appropriate reading, discussing school improvement ideas with the group, and by arranging for visits to projects in other schools with similar objectives.

7. To encourage the expansion of the task force's action plan as task force members grow in their ability to distinguish between less significant and more significant improvement.

8. Task force leaders are responsible to the SCIC for the effectiveness of their work.

B. Each task force member has the responsibility for at least one activity listed in the action plan. (No free rides; everyone works) Some task force members also have responsibility for the achievement of objectives (one planning sheet). (See Appendix B.)

C. The task force will have an established meeting time and place. Members will agree initially to schedule other responsibilities around the task force meeting time so that task force meetings will be well attended. A member who must be absent will contact the leader before the meeting to provide the leader with the necessary progress report. The absent member also contacts the leader after the meeting for a briefing regarding what happened.

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D. The task force's organizational relationship with the SCIC is shown in the diagram in Appendix C.

E. Initially, the task force is small--4-6 members. Later, as the task force assumes new duties, the membership is expanded.

F. As a task force grows in size and complexity, sub-groups related to specific objectives may be formed.

G. Initially, the task force is staffed by volunteers. No one should be arbitrarily assigned to a group.

H. Once the original group has been formed, additional members may be invited to join the group. Members are chosen on the basis of their ability to contribute to the group's objectives, regardless of whether those persons are teachers, non-teaching staff members, pupils, or parents.

I. Some task forces may be sponsored by the parents' association or by the student council. Most task forces, however, will probably be sponsored by the faculty.

J. Whenever possible task forces are provided with a small budget to cover the costs of travel of their members to other schools to view promising projects and to cover the cost of establishing a modest professional library related to the task force's objectives.

IV. Evaluation

A. Each task force is responsible for conducting three kinds of evaluations:

1. Evaluation of the impact of the task force's work in relation to the task forces objectives,

2. Evaluation of the processes whereby the task force makes its decisions, solves its problems, develops its plans, and manages its work, and

3. Evaluation designed to improve the effectiveness of each of the task force's projects at each stage of its development (formative evaluation).

B. Impact evaluation is formal and usually statistical.

C. Process evaluation and formative evaluation may be informal and non-statistical. Process and formative information is developed primarily for the task force's own use. Such information is helpful to the task force as it makes decisions regarding its own effectiveness.

D. Most task forces will require outside consultant assistance in designing their evaluation procedures. Such assistance is available in some schools or school districts and from most universities. (If consultant assistance is not available, the evaluation expectations of the task force should be minimal.)

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SUMMARY OF THE SCHOOL CLIMATE IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

Appendix D, No. 8

Eight Steps
by
Eugene R. Howard

This school climate improvement process has been developed by the State of Colorado's League of Schools for Climate Improvement. As of June 1, 1981, seventy schools had completed their assessments and had successfully formed climate improvement task forces.

Eight Steps

The eight steps in the process, shown in Figure 1, are:

1. Form the School Climate Improvement Committee (SCIC). This committee manages the climate improvement process, provides leadership and support to the task forces, obtains and maintains faculty, student, and parent support for the project, and assesses and reports on the project's outcomes. Parents, students, and staff interested in climate improvement serve on this committee.

2. Collect Base-Line Data. One of the first tasks of the SCIC is to collect base-line data so that the impact of the climate improvement project can be measured over time. Two general questions are answered with the base-line data: (1) To what extent does this school now have a positive or negative climate? and (2) To what extent are the symptoms of a negative climate apparent in the school?

Data relating to question #1 may be obtained from assessments of pupil and staff morale, and from climate assessment instruments such as the CFK Ltd Profile.

Information related to climate symptoms is already available in most schools. The SCIC has the task of gathering this information, insuring its accuracy, and summarizing it. Information on the following topics is commonly available:

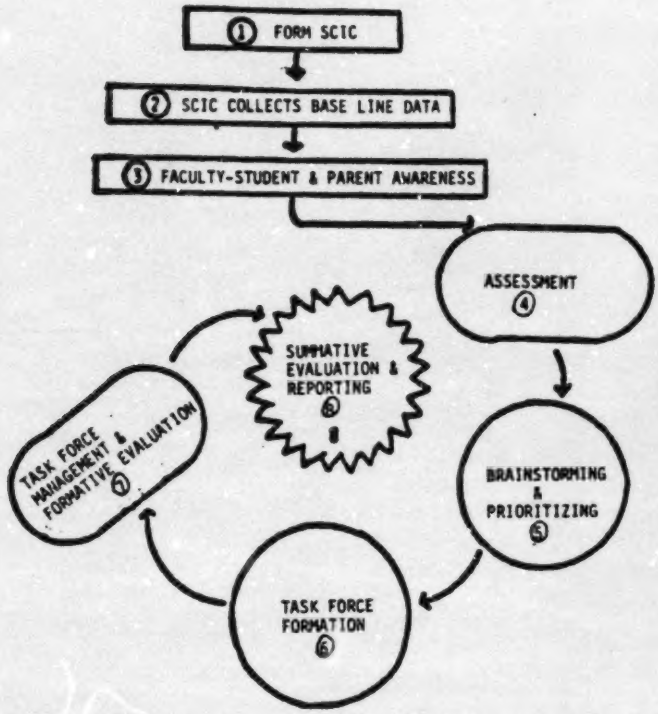
- discipline problems (referrals--- number and degree of severity of offense)
- staff and student absenteeism
- percentage of low and failing grades (and high and excellent grades)
- vandalism costs (while school is in session)
- drop-out rate (secondary)
- library useage
- attendance at school-sponsored activities
- faculty turn-over
- suspensions
- drug and alcohol abuse statistics

Revised 7/21/81

Figure 1

SCHOOL CLIMATE IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

EIGHT STEPS


1 FORM SCIC
2 SCIC COLLECTS BASE LINE DATA
3 FACULTY-STUDENT & PARENT AWARENESS
ASSESSMENT 4
BRAINSTORMING & PRIORITIZING 5
TASK FORCE FORMATION 6
TASK FORCE MANAGEMENT & FORMATIVE EVALUATION 7
SUMMATIVE EVALUATION & REPORTING 8

3. Raising the Level of Faculty, Student and Parent Awareness. Through a series of awareness-raising workshops and through a variety of other activities, faculty members, students, and parents learn about school climate and become convinced that climate improvement activities would benefit their school. Two very valuable activities: (1) visiting other schools which have successful programs and (2) participation in a mini-audit (Step 4) of another school.

4. Assessing the School's Climate. SCIC sponsors a mini-audit of the school's climate. The mini-audit may be done with a written instrument or with a visiting team. The mini-audit will identify those climate determinants which are being most positively and least positively affected by the school's activities, programs and projects. Parents, students, and the total school staff are actively involved in this process. Mini-audit results are analyzed, interpreted, and communicated to faculty, students, and parents.

5. Brainstorming and Prioritizing. At a workshop organized for this purpose, staff members and parent and student leaders use mini-audit information on which to base judgments regarding promising practices for improving the school's climate. From one to five determinants are chosen for future emphasis.

6. Task Force Formation. SCIC then forms from one to five task forces. Each task force is given a charge from SCIC to initiate activities, projects, and programs to influence positively one of the determinants of climate. Task forces may be sponsored by the faculty, by a parent organization, or by the student council.

7. Task Force Management. SCIC and the principal facilitate and support the work of the task forces. Task force leaders report progress periodically to the principal, to SCIC, to the total faculty, and to parent and student groups as appropriate.

8. Summative Evaluation. SCIC collects, interprets, and reports data regarding the extent to which the school's climate has been improved and the extent to which there have been changes in the climate symptoms. The instruments and procedures used are the same as those used to collect base-line data (Step 2).

An Organizational Structure

Figure 2 shows an organizational structure for managing school climate improvement.

A unique feature of this organizational plan is the dual membership of each task force leader. Each leader is a member of his or her task force and also a member of SCIC.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information regarding how this process works, contact:

Eugene R. Howard, Director
School Improvement & Leadership Services Unit
Colorado Department of Education
201 E. Colfax
Denver, CO 80203
(303) 866-5356

APPENDIX A

SAMPLE CHARGE STATEMENT TO A NEW TASK FORCE

The _____ Task Force is charged with accomplishing the following:

1. To study the recommendations for school improvement which have been made by various sub-groups in the climate assessment workshop and to develop objectives and activities consistent with those recommendations.

2. To study and discuss other promising approaches for influencing positively the determinant to be impacted and to develop objectives and activities related to those approaches. (significance)

3. To agree on an over-all improvement plan related to the determinant to be impacted.

4. To seek approval of the improvement plan by the SCIC.

5. Following approval of the plan, to implement it with due consideration for specific task assignments and target dates.

6. To foster professional growth and development among all task force participants so that the group's impact on climate will be progressively enhanced.

7. To report the progress of the task force to the SCIC, the faculty, parents, students, the superintendent's office, and the Board of Education.

8. To recruit new talent into the task force as such talent is needed to achieve newly-defined objectives.

9. To replace non-functioning members as necessary.

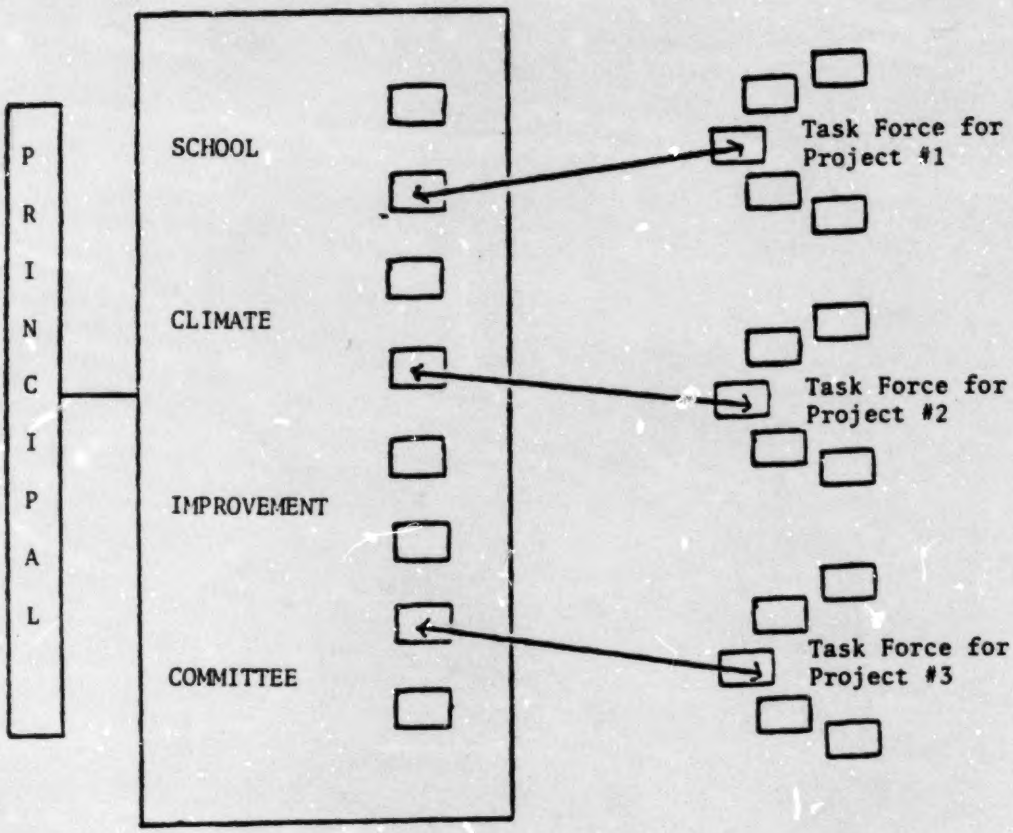
10. To evaluate the impact of the task force's work in relation to the task force's objectives, and to report this impact information to the SCIC and other interested groups and individuals.

11. To evaluate the effectiveness of the processes whereby the task force makes its decisions, solves its problems, develops its plans, and manages its work. To improve the effectiveness of the task force by modifying its procedures in accordance with such evaluations.

12. To periodically evaluate the effectiveness of each of the task force's school improvement projects so that the effectiveness of each project can be improved at each stage of its development (formative evaluation).

ORGANIZATIONAL PLAN FOR

SCHOOL CLIMATE IMPROVEMENT



Each task force plans, administers, and evaluates one climate improvement project.

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE PLAN OF WORK - TASK FORCE

TASK FORCE ON TEACHER ADVISEMENT

OBJECTIVE: IMPROVE COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN TEACHERS AND PUPILS AND PROVIDE EACH PUPIL WITH FACULTY SUPPORT IN PERSONAL PROBLEM SOLVING AND DECISION MAKING.

RESPONSIBILITY: JIM HANSON ASSISTED BY: MARIE DAVIS, JO ANN BROWN BILL BUCKNER, HAROLD JENSEN

ACTIVITIES	TARGET DATE	RESPONSIBILITY
1. PROVIDE TASK FORCE MEMBERS WITH INFORMATION REGARDING SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS.	ON-GOING	JIM
2. ORGANIZE VISITATIONS TO OTHER SCHOOLS	SEPT. 20 OCT. 15 NOV. 15	BILL
3. DESIGN PILOT PROJECT FOR JEFFERSON HIGH SCHOOL	DEC. 1	HAROLD AND TOTAL TASK FORCE
4. DESIGN EVALUATION PLAN FOR PILOT PROJECT	DEC. 1	JO ANN
5. PLAN AND CONDUCT IN-SERVICE FOR PILOT PROJECT ADVISORS	OCT. 15 NOV. 15 DEC. 5 AND ON-GOING	MARIE
6. KEEP FACULTY, PARENTS, AND STUDENTS INFORMED OF PROJECTS	ON-GOING	JIM AND MARIE

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SCHOOL CLIMATE IMPROVEMENT RATIONALE

Several recent research studies indicate that an improved climate contributes to (1) the reduction of symptoms of alienation and (2) improved achievement.

1. Michael Rutter University of London Fifteen Thousand Hours	1. Studied 12 urban secondary schools. The "ethos" or "climate" has a significant effect on student behavior, including troublesome behavior and achievement.
2. Wilbur Brookover Michigan State School Social Systems and Student Achievement	2. Studied 91 randomly-selected elementary schools in Michigan. "School learning climate" explained differences in achievement as well as did racial composition of the school or socio-economic level of pupils.
3. Safe Schools Task Force State of Washington (1980)	3. Spent two years studying causes of vandalism, theft, crimes against persons, etc. conclusion: "An invigorating school climate -- one that provides high levels of student and staff satisfaction and commitment ... is the most important element in reducing school crime."
4. Connecticut Safe Schools Study (1980)	4. The council recommended climate improvement in schools as a priority for the state. Climate described as "The key to avoiding much of the violence and destruction that occurs in our schools."
5. Dr. Ronald Edmonds Harvard (1980)	5. Analyzed and summarized several studies designed to identify characteristics of effective urban schools. Identified four characteristics common to all studies: 1. Strong administrative leadership. 2. "Climate of expectation" 3. The school's "atmosphere" (climate) -- "orderly with being rigid: quiet without being oppressive: generally conducive to the instructional business at hand," and 4. Frequent monitoring of pupil progress.
6. Lawrence Lezotte, Et Al Michigan State University School Learning Climate and Student Achievement	6. Analyzes a large number of studies which "largely demonstrate that schools, and school learning climates in particular, have a significant impact on achievement." Defines learning climate as "The Norms, beliefs, and attitudes reflected in institutional patterns and behavioral practices that enhance or impede student achievement."